

INTERVIEW
WITH
“TONY WILLIAMS”
THE DRUMMER
BY
MICHAEL DRAKE

"I'm a PRINCE"

TONY WILLIAMS

by Michael Drake

"Everyone has a talent and it depends on what you do with it and how you develop your talent and nurture it. That is what really counts."

MICHAEL:

Any regrets?

TONY:

No regrets. Things happen when they are supposed to happen I believe, and if you put work into your dreams and visions then it will go the way it is supposed to and not necessarily the way you think it's supposed to happen. I've tried to put work in areas of my life that I thought were important, that weren't necessarily musical. Sometimes they were just personal growth things that I had to work on. I realized there were certain things that I didn't know how to do. Human things, so I had to seek out professional help. I feel that that was what I was supposed to do. My happiness is important and if I am not happy I don't think that I would want to pursue other things. You don't have to be an "anguished" person to make music or to be successful. Someone asked me what was my road in life as if I were supposed to say music. I didn't think so. I thought my road was to be happy, then everything else in my life would make itself apparent.

M: Have you been lucky?

T: Oh yes, I have been at the right place at the right time, but if I wouldn't have been prepared I would not have been able to capitalize on the fortune or ever recognize the opportunity.

M: What was the first instrument that you played?

T: I played a fife in 2nd or 3rd grade.

M: What kind of diversions from music do you do?

T: I'm always studying something whether it's going to cooking school or taking swimming lessons. My hobby right now is the stock market.

M: Any highlights in your life?

T: One of the highlights for me is the band that I have been working with over the past 5 years.

piano - Mulgrew Miller

sax - Silly Pierce

trumpet - Wallace Roney

bass - Ira Coleman

The fact that I have put a band together & kept it together for 5 yrs. and to also know that the music I have written for the band is something that they like playing has been a great experience for me. The band has taught me a lot about myself. It's important to like the people you work with. You don't have to because the music transcends all of the personal dynamics, but it helps.

M: What was your first gig?

T: It was in the summer of '54, I was 8 yrs. old. My dad was a hobby sax player and he worked at the Post office and on weekends he would play weddings and parties. I would go along, it was sorta like baby-sitting me. I kept watching the drummer. I asked dad if I could sit in on the next set and to my surprise he said yes! Then he asked me what instrument I wanted to play! We played "Now's The Time" You gotta keep in mind that he said yes before he even knew what instrument I wanted to play. I felt that was quite unique, because he could have said "well I don't know what the

other guys would say" or "well let me hear you practice first and then maybe next week".

M: So with this co-leader band, who makes more money?

T: The agents and managers.

M: Who wrote the tunes you did for Summerfest?

T: 1/3 of the songs are mine and the rest are Jan's.

M: How did this gig come about?

T: I was talking to my manager as to what I was going to do this summer and I thought it would be nice to be able to get Jan to come out and play some dates. So Jan and I talked for a couple of weeks and agreed to do it. We practiced for 5 days. Jan brought his tunes and I had mine.

M: What was the reason for doing this?

T: We had worked in the studio together but never on a gig! So that was the reason.

M: Any plans for this group?

T: Part of the idea is not to put goals on this project, or expectations on ourselves. We just wanted to come out and play, and have fun.

I like to play for people because that is what I like to do more than anything else. I like to play with people for people. As long as it communicates a feeling and they enjoy it they don't have to understand it.